

# DAILY BULLETIN

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## UNITED STATES HAS SPENT \$1 BILLION FEEDING THE HUNGRY IN DARFUR

Shortfall in funding causes food aid to be halved when donors default

By Charles W. Corey  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Between 2004 and 2006, the United States has spent more than \$1 billion feeding the hungry in the crisis-gripped Darfur region of western Sudan, and remains committed to caring for distressed people in the area, a top U.S. government official told the U.S. Congress May 11.

At the same time, Michael Hess, assistant administrator in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, said other donors must come through on their commitments. He made that point before the Human Rights Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives and its companion group, the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

Hess was called to Capitol Hill to brief legislators on the latest USAID developments on Darfur. He was joined by Jonathan Dworken, acting director of USAID's Food for Peace Program; Dana Ott, acting director of USAID's Office of Sudan Programs; and Kenn Crossley, U.S. relations officer for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

Hess reminded the lawmakers that in addition to other assistance, Congress is now considering a \$225 million

emergency supplemental funding request for Sudan, of which \$170 million is earmarked for Darfur. He urged the lawmakers to approve the funding as quickly as possible so relief work can continue expeditiously.

In 2005, the United States contributed 85 percent of the funding for the World Food Programme's operation in Sudan, Hess said, but it continues to encourage other donors to contribute more to help care for those suffering in Darfur.

"While we give a lot to WFP," the United States also has given \$22 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC's) food distribution program and \$8 million to five NGOs distributing food in Darfur, he said.

Additionally, even though WFP has been forced to cut daily food rations by 50 percent because of a severe shortfall in funding, he reassured Congress that the United States will continue contributing to supplemental feeding programs to ensure that those people who are most in danger of acute malnutrition will receive the support they need.

"WFP and our partners are working hard to make sure that the therapeutic feeding programs and the supplemental feeding programs for those who are most at risk will continue," he pledged.

Dworken said Sudan will continue as "a top priority" for the Office of Food for Peace. He said Food for Peace has taken three key steps to help deal with the current WFP ration shortfall:

- Moving 2,850 tons of noncereal commodities to Port Sudan from pre-positioned stockpiles in Dubai and Lake Charles, Louisiana, for distribution in Darfur;
- Diverting 4,750 tons of food to Port Sudan that was being shipped to stockpiles in Dubai; and
- Procuring 40,000 tons of cereals valued at \$36 million for rapid direct shipment to Sudan (an emergency action taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture).

Dworken said those three steps add up to about 47,600 tons of food, valued at \$48 million, which should be delivered from late May through late June.

Food for Peace, he added, also is working closely with the U.S. Department of State to help bring other donors into the process.

"The president spoke publicly [May 8 from the White House] to encourage other donors to get involved. Secretary Rice also spoke a couple of days ago. We have been speaking with donors continuously, as we always do, especially about Sudan -- both in Khartoum, in donors' conferences, and in capitals," Dworken told the lawmakers.

The government of Sudan also has its own cereal stocks, Dworken said, which the United States, along with the United Nations, has been encouraging for feeding in Darfur, preferably through the World Food Programme.

#### A USAID "FIELD PRESENCE" IN SUDAN

Dana Ott, acting director of the Office of Sudan Programs at USAID, told the lawmakers that USAID is now in the process of "re-establishing a field presence" in Sudan and has not had a permanent mission office in Sudan for about 15 years.

"Most of the emergency programs have been run from Washington and from temporary staff in the field and in Khartoum," she said, "so the goal is to try to bring all of it together back in Sudan." She added that USAID's development programs in Sudan have been run out of a Nairobi field office.

"Our programs on the reconstruction side," she said, "have focused on supporting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement [and] providing a peace dividend for the people in southern Sudan," which includes greater economic opportunity, access to health care, access to education and more visible infrastructure such as roads.

Ott told the lawmakers that Sudan is the largest program in USAID's Africa Bureau -- which she attributed to the ongoing emergency food program. "Of the \$850 million we spent in Sudan last year, easily \$500 million was food assistance," she said, "and then a significant other portion was humanitarian nonfood assistance."

Ott predicted that USAID's new office will be opened in Khartoum in July and said USAID also is looking forward to the construction of a new consulate compound in Juba.

Crossley of the World Food Programme credited the United States for being "far and away the largest donor to WFP worldwide. Certainly, in Sudan, since 2005, we have received \$690 million [from the United States] out of \$975 million total contributions. ... So, clearly, the

U.S. government is driving all of the effective response in Sudan right now.”

For additional information on U.S. policies, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency:  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>

## SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS PART OF REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

U.S. officials discuss Burmese Karen, North Korean refugee situations

By Peggy B. Hu  
 Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States continues to offer safe haven to legitimate refugees while protecting national security interests and counterterrorism efforts, U.S. officials told the House International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations May 10.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent decision to waive Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) resettlement restrictions for several thousand members of the Karen, a Burmese ethnic minority, living in Thailand's Tham Hin refugee camp is an example of this balancing act between security and humanitarian concerns, said Ellen Sauerbrey, assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration.

Assistant Attorney General Rachel Brand told the subcommittee that U.S. immigration policies historically have been preventive, or "designed to prevent undesirable aliens from entering the United States." This outlook includes "a presumption against the admission of aliens involved with terrorist organizations or individuals engaged in terrorist activities," she said.

U.S. counterterrorism efforts are broad, Brand explained. "Thus, in addition to prosecuting those who commit acts of terrorism or plan terrorist attacks, the department prosecutes those who provide material support to terrorists." According to State Department spokesman Sean McCormack, who briefed reporters May 5, representatives of the Department of Homeland Security discovered during interviews at the Tham Hin camp that some refugees

there might have provided some "material support" to the Karen National Union, considered by the United States to be a terrorist organization.

McCormack explained that "anybody who might be a combatant or a member of the Karen National Union would not be eligible for resettlement in the United States, even under this waiver authority." However, as a State Department fact sheet released the same day explained, the secretary's decision allows Karen members resettlement in the United States if it can be determined that these refugees "pose no danger to the safety and security of the United States."

Brand stressed that any actions the United States takes with regard to the admission of refugees "must not conflict with or undermine our counter-terrorism strategy -- by admitting persons who pose a security threat to this country, by complicating positions the government takes in litigation, or by sending inconsistent messages to the world about our policy toward acts of terror."

## NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

The United States also remains "deeply concerned about the hardships suffered by the North Korean people and the plight of those North Koreans who have fled their country in search of asylum," Sauerbrey said. According to Sauerbrey, the United States has been working with other governments and refugee organizations to find ways to deal with cases of individual North Korean asylum seekers and recently resettled six North Korean refugees in the United States.

Sauerbrey said "many host governments are reluctant to allow us to process cases of North Korean asylum seekers on their territory." These countries facilitate the "quiet transit" of North Korea refugees to South Korea (nearly 1,400 in 2005; 449 so far in 2006), but fear that U.S. government involvement could disrupt this mechanism by generating unwanted publicity and complicating bilateral relations.

In an April 2005 hearing on North Korea, former U.S. Special Envoy Joseph DeTrani said the position of many Southeast Asian governments on North Korean refugees "presents sensitive political challenges." He said only three countries in Southeast Asia -- Cambodia, East Timor and the Philippines -- are party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol and added that many countries in Southeast Asia have diplomatic relations with North Korea.

## U.S. COLLABORATING WITH INTERNATIONAL GROUPS ON BIRD FLU PLANS

Will help U.N. entity develop international response center, official says

By Kathryn McConnell  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States is collaborating with major international bodies to help countries affected by highly pathogenic avian influenza, or bird flu, control and eradicate the disease, according to a senior U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) official.

Testifying May 11 before the Senate Agriculture Committee, Ron DeHaven, administrator of the department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), said USDA is spending \$20 million on bird flu control and prevention efforts.

The efforts include helping the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) develop an "emergency operations command center" to track the spread of the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus in poultry in and among countries and coordinate response efforts.

The U.S. Congress, in December 2005, approved a total \$91.35 million for USDA pandemic influenza preparedness. APHIS is a USDA agency.

Additionally, USDA is coordinating with the FAO, U.N. World Health Organization (WHO) and World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) on enhancing pandemic planning and preparedness at national levels, including providing in-country training and capacity building in affected countries and monitoring flyways of migratory birds that can carry the virus.

Through collaboration with the U.S. Agency for international Development (USAID) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), USDA is posting in-country experts to six Asian countries -- Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam -- to help establish veterinary frameworks necessary to reduce outbreaks of the virus in birds. The department has planned train-the-trainer exercises to be carried out in these countries and in Burma, according to USDA's preparedness plan.

In the United States, DeHaven said, USDA's aggressive surveillance focuses on wild birds, commercial poultry operations, live bird markets and backyard flocks.

Surveillance involves early detection of the disease followed by investigations of bird deaths or sickness.

Wild birds, in particular certain waterfowl and shorebirds, are considered to be "natural reservoirs," or hosts, for many strains of bird flu, he said.

"This approach is the right one to take and will pay off greatly in the event this highly pathogenic H5N1, or any other serious influenza virus, reaches [the United States]," DeHaven said.

By summer, USDA will be monitoring all four wild bird migratory routes -- or flyways -- from other countries to the United States, De Haven said.

USDA is spending \$9 million to enhance smuggling interdiction and trade compliance efforts to prevent birds from affected countries from entering the United States illegally, DeHaven said.

The department also is using \$7 million to continue research and development of improved tools like vaccines, genome sequencing, environmental surveillance and biosecurity; \$10 million to increase the animal vaccine stockpile and stock other response supplies; and \$18 million to strengthen domestic surveillance and diagnostics.

And it will spend \$9 million to enhance planning, equipment, and preparedness training, and the development of simulation models, he said.

DeHaven said the U.S. preparedness strategy includes a communication campaign "to inform while not alarming" the public about how bird flu is transmitted and the importance of safe food handling practices.

USDA's preparedness efforts are part of the Bush administration's National Plan for Pandemic Influenza release earlier in early May.

## HOUSE COMMITTEE LOOKS AT LESSON FROM HURRICANE KATRINA

The U.S. House of Representatives Government Reform Committee also is hearing from experts about the nation's capability to prepare for and respond to pandemic influenza.

The memories of Hurricane Katrina and the disaster it caused on the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005 were vivid in the Washington hearing room May 11.



Various assessments have found that government agencies at all levels did not properly coordinate their efforts to aid the hundreds of thousands of people affected.

“It’s the committee’s hope that lessons learned from Katrina are being applied to any deficiencies in the [National Response Plan] so the country is more readily prepared for future disasters,” said Committee Chairman Representative Tom Davis, a Republican from Virginia.

The National Response Plan is a strategy created by the Department of Homeland Security to provide the structure and mechanisms for coordinating federal support to state and local emergency managers.

It is designated as the mechanism for directing a response to the outbreak of pandemic influenza, an event that projections indicate could cause illness for 25 percent to 35 percent of the U.S. population.

Given the potential of a full-blown pandemic, Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) John Agwunobi told the committee that no nation is prepared fully today.

Still, federal officials have made a solid start, he said, convening a series of 49 summit meetings around the nation over the last several months.

Federal officials have been bringing together local and state governments and private-sector individuals to nudge them toward focusing on pandemic preparedness.

“Every state has a plan,” Agwunobi said, though the plans constantly are being improved and refined. He said the United States should develop “an enduring national ethic of readiness,” which would instill urgency for preparedness in all institutions, individuals and families.

The HHS official said devising and refining preparedness strategies also will enable the nation to respond more effectively to annual bouts of seasonal influenza, during which the health care sector occasionally is beset with problems of vaccine availability and pharmaceutical shortages.

Members of Congress also urged government agencies to improve their state of readiness by implementing policies that allow personnel to telework – perform their work via electronic connections rather than reporting to an office building.

Having this capability to sustain government functions during a time when widespread illness may keep people at home is critical, the lawmakers said.

A study conducted by watchdog agency the Government Accountability Office (GAO) shows most agencies have failed to adequately develop their telework plans for implementation in an emergency.

“None of the 23 agencies [surveyed] demonstrated that it could ensure adequate technological capacity to allow designated personnel to telework during an emergency,” said GAO Comptroller General David Walker in testimony before the committee.

For more information on avian influenza and efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu:  
[http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/bird\\_flu.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html)

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## HOSPITAL SHIP MERCY SAILS OFF TO NEW COOPERATIVE MISSION

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Nongovernmental organizations join U.S. military personnel for four-nation visit

By Jane Morse  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.S. Navy ship Mercy -- which acquitted itself admirably after the tsunami that hit Indonesia -- has embarked on another humanitarian assistance mission in the Asia-Pacific region.

Having left San Diego April 24, the Mercy is on a five-month deployment that will take her to the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh and East Timor.

This time, however, she will be carrying not just military personnel but civilians from several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well.

During a May 10 briefing in Washington, Admiral Gary Roughead, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, told reporters: “I think perhaps the most unique aspect of this mission is that Mercy and her military professionals are being joined by nongovernmental organizations.”

The U.S. Navy has worked with NGOs during crises in the past, he said. "This, however, is a premeditated and proactive partnership, not initiated by crisis but simply by a desire to assist our neighbors. I believe that this model of cooperation and deliberate planning with the NGOs and the nations that are participating is the way of the future."

The admiral said the first phase of the operation in the Philippines will involve two different NGOs onboard the Mercy -- the Honolulu-based Aloha Medical Mission and Project Hope.

According to Roughead, there will be six additional Philippine NGOs participating from the shore that will utilize the Mercy's facilities. Arrangements are being made for even more NGOs to participate in other phases of the operation, he added.

"I believe that this opportunity will achieve the refinement of the interagency and international operating procedures, standard operating procedures, for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief that began last year with the post-tsunami relief efforts," Roughead said.

In addition to the NGO personnel, the 900-foot-long Mercy is carrying a U.S. military medical team, two H-60 helicopters, Navy construction engineers and representatives from the U.S. Public Health Service.

Roughead said the group represents an interagency, international and multispecialized team of medical professionals capable of providing a wide range of services onboard and ashore.

"It's an unprecedented group of volunteers and professionals, civilian and military men and women," the admiral said. "They are dedicated to saving lives and restoring hope and spreading good will."

The medical capability that Mercy will bring to the region includes basic medical evaluation and treatment, dental and optometry screenings, eyewear distribution, preventive medicine treatment, general and ophthalmology surgery, public health services and even veterinary services. The Mercy team is prepared to administer to medical and humanitarian assistance needs through medical, dental, civic and construction action projects, the admiral said.

"The Mercy deployment is a demonstration of U.S. commitment to the region and of the commitment to the

people of the region with whom we share common bonds as stakeholders in the Pacific," Roughead said.

The admiral emphasized that the Mercy deployment is focused on needs expressed by the host nations involved. A number of nonhost nations, however, are supporting the Mercy's interagency and international team effort.

"Canada is providing some dental professionals," Roughead said, "and both Australia and Singapore plan to send teams during various periods of the mission."

Roughead explained that as Mercy moves from location to location, there will be changes in the participants from the individual NGOs as well as the NGOs themselves.

"(M)any of the volunteers who serve with the NGOs are only able to do this for short periods of time, so there will be a constant changing of the NGO personnel onboard the ship," he said. "And we have worked very closely with the NGOs and host nations to facilitate that exchange of people. ... (T)hey'll spend some time in a particular area and then they'll go back to their normal occupation."

In the aftermath of the tsunami that hit Indonesia and other parts of Asia on December 26, 2004, the Mercy was deployed to Aceh, Indonesia, and then Nias Island. During that deployment, the Mercy team treated more than 107,000 patients, the admiral said. They also performed 466 surgeries, 6,000 dental procedures, tens of thousands of medical procedures and distributed more than 4,000 pairs of eyeglasses. (See related article.)

"For the U.S. military, it was our largest relief operation since the Berlin airlift," Roughead said. "And for the U.S. military, it was our biggest involvement in Southeast Asia since Vietnam."

"(I)t was an incredible demonstration of just what is achievable when we all work together for the betterment of the human condition," the admiral said.

See also, U.S. Response to Tsunami:  
[http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/recovery.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/recovery.html)

More information on the Mercy is available on a Web site for the U.S. Navy ship:  
<http://www.mercy.navy.mil/>

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